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## THE ERNEST MEMORIAL

Germany, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was producing much work of great originality in sculpture, and possessed many artists of high ability. At this time, Nuremberg was the centre of artistic Germany, and it was here that the Vischer family lived and worked for three generations, fathers and sons pursuing the trade of the bronze caster and becoming masters of the art.

Herman Vischer, the founder of the family, attracted by the opportunities afforded by Nuremberg, came to the city about 1450, and there set up his workshop, which, in future years, was to mirror the transition of German art from the Gothic to the Renaissance style, and to produce some of the finest sculpture in bronze that has ever been given to the world.

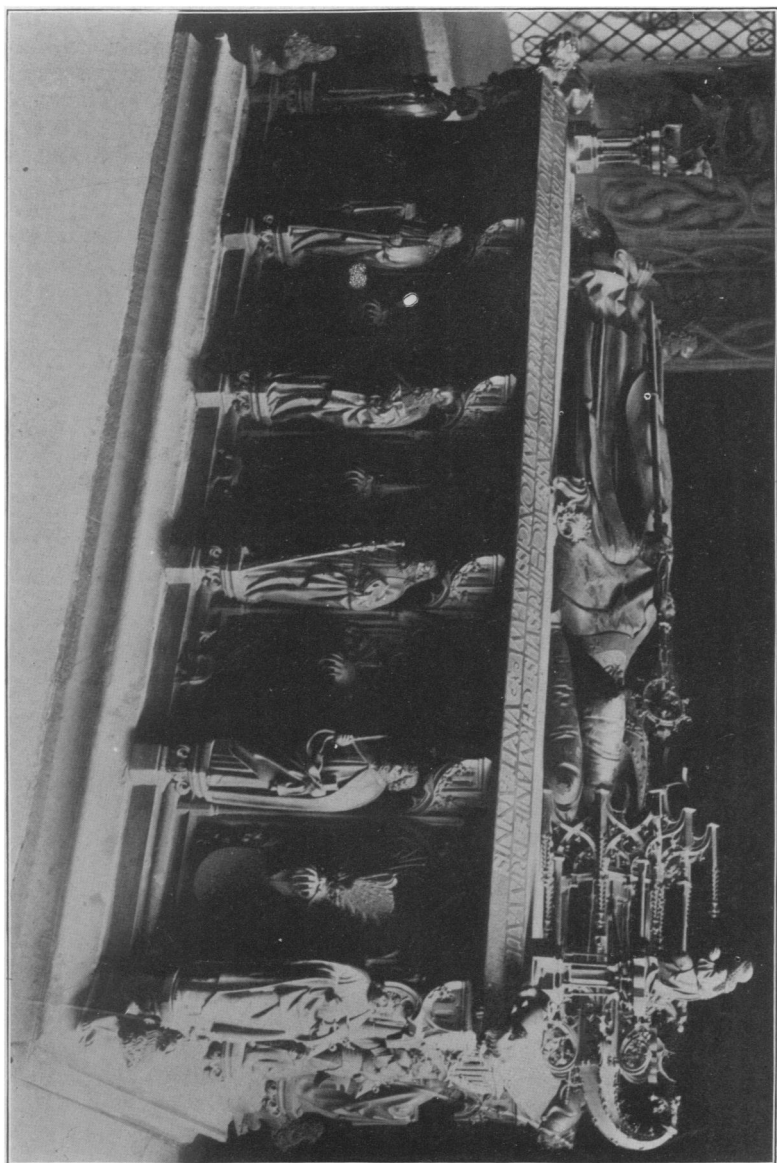
Peter, the great artist of the family, was the son of Herman, and it was he who fashioned the bronze Memorial of Archbishop Ernest, which stands in the Cathedral at Magdeburg, a copy of which, in plaster, has been lately placed in the Museum's collection of casts, in the Rotunda.

The tomb is among his earliest works, variously ascribed to the years 1495 and 1497, and shows a strong preponderance of Gothic influence, which Vischer was later to greatly modify, when the spirit of the Italian Renaissance reached Germany. Yet even here is a striving for realism strongly marked in the recumbent figure, with the fine clear-cut face showing great strength of treatment, and a most successful attempt at portraying the individuality of the Archbishop. The figure lies in high relief under a Gothic canopy, holding in the hands a crosier and a pontifical cross. Along the sides of the tomb are figures of the twelve Apostles, standing on pedestals and beneath canopies, beautifully wrought in the Gothic style. At the head of the tomb stands St. Maurice, and at the foot, St. Stephen. Four lions guard the four corners, holding shields, and on the top, at each corner, are the symbols of the four Evangelists, lacking the eagle of St. John, which has been broken off and lost in the flood of years. Along the base are fantastic dogs and other beasts, and lions protruding from the corners suggest gargoyles in their grotesque attitudes. The whole monument is fashioned with exquisite care, down to the minutest detail, and shows in every aspect the work of the master.

An inscription, in fine Gothic characters, runs around the tomb, telling us that "with whatever art the hands of the craftsman have wrought me, yet am I but dust and contain the dust and all the earthly remains" of the Archbishop; then there follows a prayer for the repose of his soul. There is a quietness about the recumbent figure, with the head resting upon cushions and the folds of the drapery falling gracefully to the feet, where crouches a lion holding an armorial shield, which suggests that the Archbishop may have found the answer to his prayer.

The good Archbishop himself ordered his tomb to be made by Peter Vischer, and as he did not die until 1513, and the tomb was finished by 1497, he had an opportunity to admire and approve the beautiful memorial that was to serve as a reminder of him through these many generations.

M. H. S.



CAST OF TOMB OF ARCHBISHOP ERNEST  
From the Original in the Cathedral at Magdeburg